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# <sup>68</sup> Perry vies for 'great place' status

City hopes to  
be selected as  
recipient of  
state grant.

**BY STACIE LETT**  
THE RECORD

On Friday, Sept. 16, the work was done.

Meetings had been held, research had been done, and presentations had been made. Three judges heard why Perry should be one of Iowa's "great places."

Now all that's left is the wait.

"This has been an exhausting effort," said Justine Zimmer of Hometown Perry, Iowa. "A lot of people came together and worked very hard to put together a presentation for our judges. It was a lot of work, but it was well worth it."

"Great Places Iowa" is a program created by Gov. Tom Vilsack to set up a "one-stop-shop" for communities wanting to make improvements, or

see a project completed that would enhance their appeal to the public such as bike trails, restaurant areas or park and recreation projects.

The Iowa legislature appropriated \$300,000 to the program and applications were taken by the Great Places Iowa committee from communities interested in participating.

Three communities will be chosen in October for the pilot program, but all of the communities that applied still benefited from the experience.

"This experience has been a positive one for us," said Zimmerman. "We were given information from a variety of sources that will help us regardless of whether we find ourselves in the final stages of this program."

Both the City of Perry and Dallas County submitted applications for the program. Coaches were assigned to work with both entities to produce a presentation of their ideas and requests. The committee, meeting nearly every evening during the final week, spent many hours honing what they believed was the best pre-

sentation possible for consideration as a finalist in this program.

Director of the Dallas County Conservation Board Mike Wallace also submitted an application asking the state to assist with a trails system that would include three counties and several cities between Ankeny and Woodward. Dallas County was only a small piece of the overall project, but would reap the benefits if it was chosen.

"We have many people in Dallas County that utilize our trails system," Wallace said in a June 30 interview. "This project will help to connect even more of the area to our trails systems in a high-quality way."

The "Great Places Iowa" committee will hold an all-day meeting Oct. 11 in Des Moines to review applications. At the end of the day, three winners will be chosen.

"Of course, we would love to be one of the final three," said Zimmer, "but if that doesn't happen, we have definitely benefited from the process of getting to where we are."